

Vitiligo

Shahé Mankerian

Pale patches appeared on grandmother's feet
during the death march from Arapkir to Aleppo.

She wore wool socks for the rest of her life.
After marriage, she lost pigmentation on her hands.

She couldn't hide those. I tended to stare at the lesions
as she sifted through lentils for rocks and pebbles.

Maybe her discolored hands veiled the secret map
of her tormented underworld. Sometimes I traced

the borders when I napped next to her in the afternoons.
"Armenians are the lepers of the world," she'd mumble

in her sleep and shift to face the wall against her bed.

Shahé Mankerian is the principal of St. Gregory Alfred and Marguerite Hovsepian School in Pasadena and the co-director of the Los Angeles Writing Project. As an educator, he has been honored with the Los Angeles Music Center's BRAVO Award, which recognizes teachers for innovation and excellence in arts education. His poems have won Honorable Mentions in 2011 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award and Arts & Letters Journal of Contemporary Culture. Shahé was a Semi-Finalist for the Knightville Poetry Contest. He was the first place winner of 2012 "Black and White" anthology series from Outrider Press. Mankerian's most recent manuscript, *History of Forgetfulness*, has been a finalist at four prestigious competitions: the 2013 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition, the 2103 Bibby First Book Competition, the Quercus Review Press, Fall Poetry Book Award, 2013, and the 2014 White Pine Press Poetry Prize.